

3. Top Ten Ways to Ruin a Teen Summer Reading Program

10. *Make sure that all your books are hardbacks, or your paperbacks are ragged and outdated.*

Teens prefer paperbacks in good-looking condition. Try to “refurbish” or restock the YA collection before the summer reading program. Make sure that you have plenty of all types of genres, especially the series.

9. *Don't send promotional materials to schools.*

The public and private schools are a wonderful way to promote any activities at the library. Personal contact is the best way to promote the programs, but sending publicity to the classes works, too. Send bulk to the schools, but send individual flyers to teachers in the area, especially ones that you've worked with before, or that you know have a special interest in a program.

8. *Make the program as hard as possible for participants and staff.*

The KISS principle works best. If the program is too complicated, teens aren't going to want to participate. They like to be independent and if they have to ask too many questions, they just won't take part.

The staff involved in the actual implementation of the program are very important factors in the success of the program. If they don't “buy into” the reading program, it isn't going to work. The less time they need to spend dealing with explaining the rules or handing out materials and prizes, the better chance they will enjoy or at least be willing to help in the program. Give them a chance to do the fun parts of the program as well as the daily tasks.

7. *Be rigid in interpreting the rules / Don't be flexible.*

Each participant in the program is an individual, and the program should reflect their individuality. The rules are guidelines for the program, but making the participant's needs or interests count goes a long way to guaranteeing success.

6. *Make lists of specific books participants must read.*

All teens don't like the same thing, and if you make lists or give them books to read, they will view it as “homework.” Be flexible in what you allow them to read, including both the topics and the formats. Many teens are daunted by a hardcover novel, but will happily read a magazine from cover to cover.

5. *Have the librarians view the program as another of the endless tasks assigned to them.*

Getting the staff to go along with the extra work that a teen reading program will bring can be hard, but getting the staff excited about teens participating in the program is just as important as getting the teens excited. Find ways to involve staff in developing the program – ask for their opinions. If the teens feel like they are a bother to the library staff they won't continue participating, and neither will their friends.

4. *Make the publicity and promotional materials drab and lifeless.*

Attractive, colorful and lively materials for publicity, and for the program participants, is a big deciding factor in the success of a program. If the forms, instructions, posters, etc., don't catch their attention, it is going to take a big push to get them interested in the program.

3. *Don't publicize the program at all.*

Word of mouth, posters, newspaper articles, etc., are essential to the success of the program. If teens don't know about the program they aren't going to participate. Publicity needs to be in the community for parents, teachers, grandparents, and the teens themselves to know about it. Having the program announced on radio stations or TV spots gives much more exposure!

2. *Don't give incentives, or give age-inappropriate incentives.*

Getting a prize, reward or something free is exciting no matter what age you are. So getting something for participating in the program is a great way to get more teens involved. But make sure the incentives are something they will like and something they don't feel is too childish for them. Giving them a choice of what they can have is a good way to make sure that you have something for everyone.

1. *Have the program registration and publicity located in the children's department or have the same program and theme as the children's department.*

This is the ultimate kiss-of-death to the success of a teen program. Making the teens feel like they are being treated like children, or as if they were at the same level as people half their age is a big insult to them. Make them feel like there is something of their own at the library. Make them feel that they are special enough to have their own program. Make them feel like you view them not as a child, but as a young adult.